

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

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**Military Refresher Courses/Lectures on
New Weapons/Restricted Courses at the
Frunze Military Academy**

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at VYSTREL (the Superior Infantry School) [redacted] where the staff worked on such problems as the best method of utilizing army weapons and the instructors were experts in the use of weapons by various combat units and learned the advantages and disadvantages of various weapons, the staff neither designed nor produced the weapons.

2. In regard to the [redacted] nature of various military refresher courses in the Soviet Army, each arm and service had its own refresher course. There were two types of military refresher courses. Courses included in the first type were referred to as "Pervotniye Kursi" or "Kursi Usovshchensktvovaniye". Such initial refresher courses would be attended by an officer who, after having graduated from a military school (uchilishhe), did not attend a military academy for a period of four or five years after his graduation from the officers school. The officer would then have to go to a refresher course of the first type for a period of from four to six months. These courses taught new weapons and their tactical use. After another four or five years, if the officer still had not been chosen to attend a military academy, he would then attend the second type of military refresher course referred

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to as "Akademicheskiiye Kursy" for nine months. These courses also covered new weapons but in greater technical detail and also included theory. These courses also emphasized to a greater extent the tactical use of troops and acquaintance with the tactics of other basic arms. The second type of refresher course was designed to prepare an officer to command self-sustaining or independent units, i.e. an infantry regiment or an independent unit of some other type.

3. There were no separate military refresher courses given for specific weapons such as automatic weapons, artillery, rockets and missiles. Artillery refresher courses would include instruction in antitank artillery, for example (however, antiaircraft artillery was taught separately and the courses were given in the Crimea). Automatic weapons were included in the infantry refresher courses as well as the use of mortars. As of early 1941 there were no rockets or missiles in the Soviet Army; there were only rifle grenades. Technical experts would not be assigned as instructors to refresher courses because only the average army officer attended the military refresher course. The better officers were sent as students to the various military academies.
4. Because of the secrecy involved in the matter of research and development of new military weapons in the USSR, no specialists on such subjects as artillery, automatic weapons, rockets, and other types of weapons lectured at the Frunze Military Academy. Once new weapons became generally known in Army circles, lectures on the weapons were normally given by the regular instructors at the academy. Such extreme secrecy developed only after 1930. Up to the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, there were about ten weapons which were kept secret even from the Army itself. They were known naturally to the particular technical committee of the Army General Staff which had developed the weapon. The Technical Committee (Technicheskii Komitet) in 1941 was under Marshal Kulik. He was in charge of supply and equipment for the Soviet Army and had formerly been chief of artillery. He operated under the Army Chief of Staff. The overall Technical Committee, as indicated earlier, was broken up into various technical committees, one for artillery, one for the engineers, etc. The existence of the secret weapons was not even divulged to the tactical instructors at the Frunze Military Academy. The secret weapons were: (a) the Katiusha - a rocket launcher which was used after the German invasion but did not prove very effective, (b) automatic rifle firing 30 rounds from one clip - it was used in the Soviet Army but was not distributed systematically, (c) PPSH (the Shoshin machine pistol -pistolet pulemot Shoshina) was distributed as an auxiliary weapon to machine gunners, artillery personnel, and sergeants, (d) and (e) two types of antitank rifles - both were put into service, (f) new types of aviation bombs (fragmentation, etc), (g) the T-34 tank had been issued secretly in limited quantity to Soviet military schools in the winter of 1940-41; the troops were not yet taught how to use the new tank; the basic tanks at that time were the T-26 and the BT tank (for use of cavalry and reconnaissance units), (h) the KV tank (Klim Voroshilov) appeared at once after the German invasion; it was a 74 ton tank and only about between 20 and 40 of them were manufactured until production was halted because they were too heavy.
5. There were "restricted" courses in the Frunze Military Academy. The most important, of course, was the instruction given at the Spetsshkola (the Soviet military espionage school) which until April 1941 occupied the two top floors of the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow. In April 1941 the Spetsshkola was moved to the Phila suburb of Moscow. Another

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type of "restricted" course given at Frunze was the one which was presented during the period July-August 1940. Most of the commanding generals of infantry and tank divisions in the Soviet Army took a special course at Frunze at that time. The program was authorized by the Soviet Army Chief of Staff and had been prepared by 20 or 30 Frunze instructors. The course was taught by some of the Frunze instructors.

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The course was open to commanding generals of divisions and it took up such problems as antitank defense and lessons learned from the first Russo-Finnish war. In addition, there were at times courses of a similar nature given at Frunze for chiefs of staff of corps and divisions.

6. In addition to the above special courses at Frunze, each Soviet military district held annual meetings for the commanding generals of corps and divisions in their areas. At a later date, the chiefs of staff of the corps and divisions were also given lectures, by either the chief of staff of the military district or a representative of the Soviet Army General Staff. The subject matter dealt primarily with new military doctrines. After the lectures, command post exercises (CPX) were conducted.

7. A special military school was set up as an affiliate of the Frunze Military Academy after the Soviet occupation of Poland in 1939. The occupation had been inefficient and disorderly and it became obvious there was a need for additional staff officers. Therefore, the VShShS (Vishiya Shkola Shtabnoi Sluzhbi - Superior School of Staff Duties) was founded and utilized training materials from Frunze and received other help. It was designed to train 2500 officers in staff duties during a two year period. There were 200 instructors on tactical subjects and about 100 on mobilization, political instruction, etc. It was a secret course and particularly in regard to the fact that 500 of the student officers were trained as mobilization specialists. All the students were trained in staff duties and in tactics from the battalion through the divisional level. The duration of the course was shortened to one year. It was a very long day for each student officer: nine hours per day of class and field work and four hours of study. In order to find sufficient instructors to teach at this new school, various ex-officers were released from prison (those had been incarcerated for political reasons) and some reserve officers were called up. It should be indicated that at that time any reserve officer in the Soviet army was an inferior officer as the good officers had to remain on continuous active duty. The VShShS which had been located in the Moscow Suburb of Phili was closed in April 1941 as the USSR was readying itself for war and felt that it had more or less enough graduates from this school. The premises of this school at Phili was taken over by the Spetsshkola.

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